

Title: **LISTEN TO THE TORNADO**

Text: Nahum 1:3

Subject: *The Character of God*

Date: Sunday Evening — May 1, 2008

Tape # AA-15

Readings: *Rex Bartley and Merle Hart*

Introduction:

Like most of you, my mind has been on those horrific scenes of devastation across our Southern states and the people whose lives have been devastated by the violent tornadoes that have swept across such a wide area in the last few days. Have you been listening to the Wind? Tonight I want to help you to listen. The title of my message is — **LISTEN TO THE TORNADO**. I cannot tell you how many times I have recited Nahum 1:3 in my own meditation. Last Sunday I read it to our family at the dinner table, and tried to explain its meaning. I did so because I wanted to ease the fear I knew my grandson experienced during the previous week's storms. I had no idea what we were to see on Thursday.

(Nahum 1:3) “The LORD [is] slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit [the

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wicked]: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds [are] the dust of his feet.”

Listen to the whirlwind. Listen to the tornado. — Who is God? What’s He like? What can we expect from him? Hold your Bible open at Nahum chapter 1, and you will see an inspired answer to those questions.

(Nahum 1:1) “The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.”

Nahum gives two titles to his message. It was both a “Burden of Woe” and a “Vision of Hope.”

We do not know who Nahum was, what kind of man he was, who his parents were, how long he lived, where he died, who his descendants were, or even if he had any descendants. All we know about this man, Nahum, is that he was a prophet of God who carried in his heart the burden of the Word of the Lord and faithfully proclaimed the message God gave him to his generation. Nahum was one of those men who

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faithfully served the Lord in obscurity, without fame or recognition in this world. But he was a faithful man who served a faithful God. For him that was enough.

God tells us virtually nothing about Nahum. But Nahum tells us much about God. Read with me Nahum 1:2-7. May the Spirit of God who inspired Nahum to write these words, now enable me to preach from them to your hearts for the glory of Christ.

(Nahum 1:2-7) “God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies. (3) The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet. (4) He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. (5) The mountains quake

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at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. (6) Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. (7) The LORD *is* good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.”

SIX ATTRIBUTES

In these verses Nahum tells us who God is, what He is like, what we can expect from him. He is declaring the attributes of God. God’s attributes are those characteristics of His Being which are essential to him, without which He would not be God. Nahum does not declare all the attributes of God’s Being. No man could do that! But he does give us six distinct attributes of our great God, six things essential to and descriptive of God’s holy character. Who is God? What is He like? **Nahum tells us that...**

1. “**God is jealous.**” — With God jealousy is not a fault, but an attribute. It is right for God to be jealous

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because He is perfect. Any assault upon His person, resistance to His will, rebellion against His rule, or objection to His work is evil. It is right for God to be jealous.

- God is jealous for His Son — Ask those who crucified him!
- God is jealous for His own honor and glory — Ask Moses!
- God is jealous for His worship and ordinances — Ask Uzza!
- God is jealous for His people — Ask Pharaoh!

God will avenge His own elect. He will avenge the honor of His name. He will avenge himself upon His enemies. (Read v. 2).

(Nahum 1:2) “God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies.”

Today men talk about God’s love as though His love were a fluctuating passion, like ours, and altogether

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isolated from His other glorious attributes. I am not going to speak about that tonight; but be sure of this — The fact that “*God is love*” does not in anyway diminish the fact that “*God is jealous.*” In fact, it is God’s love that makes Him jealous, so jealous that He is “*furious,*” so jealous that “*He reserveth wrath for His enemies.*”

NOTE: The word “*wrath*” is not in the original text. It was added by our translators. What God reserves for His enemies is inconceivably and inexpressibly horrifying! “*God is jealous*” (Nahum 1:2).

2. “**The Lord is slow to anger.**” — In other words, this great and terrible God, whose jealousy makes Him furious, is also patient, forgiving and longsuffering with sinners. God is not in a hurry to punish sinners and execute judgment upon His enemies. Judgment is His strange work. And He always defers it, giving sinners space for repentance. This is mercy! God is willing to be gracious! God now affords His enemies opportunity to repent and commands them to do so (Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9-18).

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(Acts 17:30) “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”

(2 Peter 3:9-18) “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (10) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (11) Seeing then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, (12) Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (14) Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for

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such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (15) And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; (16) As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (17) Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. (18) But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

3. “*The Lord is great in power.*” — He is the omnipotent, almighty God! He has all power and can do all that He is pleased to do. Our God is a great God, because He is “*great in power.*” A weak, frustrated, defeated God is as useless as a bucket without a bottom, or a well without water. **What is**

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omnipotence? It is the ability and power of God to do...

- All his pleasure! (Isaiah 46:9-13).

(Isaiah 46:9-13) “Remember the former things of old: for *I am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (11) Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it. (12) Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that *are* far from righteousness: (13) I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.”

- All His Word!
- All His purpose!
- All His salvation!

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A weak god is a frustration to those who worship him, because a weak god is always frustrated. The almighty, omnipotent Jehovah is the comfort and stay of those who trust him!

4. **“The Lord will not at all acquit the wicked.”** — That is to say, **God is just.** Justice and truth are the habitation of His throne. Though He is longsuffering and patient, He will punish every transgressor. God’s forbearance is not an indication that He lacks either the will or the ability to punish His enemies. He is great in power. And He is just. Therefore, *“the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”* God will not clear the guilty. A just God cannot clear the guilty.

If God is just and must punish sin, how can any sinner ever be saved? Will God lay aside His justice that He might be merciful? No. He cannot. Justice is essential to His character. How, then, can He save us? There is only one way — Substitution (Job 33:24; Proverbs 16:6; Romans 3:24-26).

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(Job 33:24) “Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.”

(Proverbs 16:6) “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil.”

(Romans 3:24-26) “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

If God almighty saves a guilty sinner and forgives his sins three things must be done.

- The sinner must be punished to the full satisfaction of justice.
- His sins and his guilt must be totally removed.
- He must become perfectly righteous.

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And these three things can be done only by the substitutionary work of Christ.

5. “The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm.” — What do those words mean? They mean that the Lord our God, who is jealous, longsuffering, omnipotent and just, is also **totally sovereign!** He rules all things. “*And the clouds are the dust of His feet!*” (Read Psalm 115:3; 135:6).

(Psalms 115:3) “But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

(Psalms 135:6) “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

“*The Lord hath His way!*” In all things, at all times, with all creatures, and in all places, — “*The Lord hath His way!*”

- In creation!
- In providence!
- In grace!

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We rejoice in the glorious sovereignty of our great God, knowing that God always exercises His sovereignty over all things for the redemption and salvation of His people (vv. 4-6; Isaiah 45:7, 22; 50:2; 51:10-12).

(Nahum 1:4-6) “He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. (5) The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. (6) Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.”

(Isaiah 45:7) “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these *things*.”

(Isaiah 45:22) “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else*.”

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(Isaiah 50:2) “Wherefore, when I came, *was there* no man? when I called, *was there* none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because *there is* no water, and dieth for thirst.”

(Isaiah 51:10-12) “*Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? (11) Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; *and* sorrow and mourning shall flee away. (12) I, *even I, am* he that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man *that* shall die, and of the son of man *which* shall be made *as* grass;”

Even as the prophet describes the judgment of God, the fierce anger of His wrath, he raises a question

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which, when answered, carries a message of hope for sinners — “*Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide the fierceness of His anger?*” Not me! Not you! God’s wrath would consume us like a snowflake in a blast furnace! But the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Substitute, stood before the indignation of almighty God and consumed His wrath for us!

Do you see these attributes of God? The Lord is jealous. The Lord is longsuffering. The Lord is omnipotent. The Lord is just. The Lord is sovereign! Now read verse 7. Here is the sixth attribute by which Nahum identifies our God.

6. “**The Lord is good!**” — Oh, I like that! Our great God is good! Goodness is as essential to God’s Being as is His sovereignty, His justice, His truth, and His holiness. In fact, the very name “God” is an abbreviation of the word “good.”

Proposition: Goodness is the character of our God; and the goodness of God gives us hope, comfort, and

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strength in the midst of our trials and sorrows in this world.

Divisions: Let me briefly show you three things which Nahum here declares about our great, glorious and good God.

1. *“The Lord is good.”*
2. *“The Lord is a stronghold in the day of trouble.”*
3. *“The Lord knoweth them that trust in him.”*

This seventh verse is full of God. It brims over with His praises. Out of this fullness may our souls be filled tonight.

GOOD

First, Nahum declares, **“The LORD is good!”** The prophet has been talking about the storm of God’s wrath, the terror of His justice, the greatness of His anger, whirlwinds, shaking mountains, melting hills, and burning earth. Then, he comes to a blessed, calm, serene island of rest — *“The LORD is good.”* I can no more explain the goodness of God than a thimble could contain the ocean. But I can tell you some of

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the things I know about God's goodness. **I know that...**

God is essentially good. — Goodness is essential to God. Without it, He would not be God. Goodness is so essentially the character of God that, as John Gill has observed, “There is nothing but goodness in God, and nothing but goodness comes from him” (James 1:13-14).

(James 1:13-14) “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: (14) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

1. He. has ordained evil, but overrules it for good (Psalm 76:10).
2. He afflicts His children and brings many evil things upon us, but He makes the evil work for good (Romans 8:28: Proverbs 12:21).

(Romans 8:28) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to

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them who are the called according to *his* purpose.”

(Proverbs 12:21) “There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.”

Illustration: Joseph (Gen. 50:20).

(Genesis 50:20) “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.”

3. God punishes sin with vengeance, but even that punishment of sin is good, as a vindication of justice and the protection of Kingdom.

God is singularly good. — He is the only good One in the universe. — “*There is none good, but One; that is God* (Matthew 19:17).

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“God’s goodness is the root of all goodness. Our goodness, if we have any, springs out of His goodness” (William Tyndale).

God is eternally and immutably good (Malachi 3:6). — The goodness of God never varies, changes, or alters. He is good, always good, good in each of His glorious Persons.

- God. the Father is good.
- God the Son is good.
- God the Holy Spirit is good.

(Malachi 3:6) “For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

God is good in all His acts of grace (Ephesians 1:3-14).

(Ephesians 1:3-14) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that

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we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (8) Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed

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with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

God is good in all His works of providence
(Romans 8:28; 11:36).

(Romans 11:33-36) “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.”

- In all that He has done!
- In all that He is doing!
- In all that He shall hereafter do!

God is infinitely, incomparably, immeasurably good. — Who can measure the goodness of God? To

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what shall His goodness be compared? He is good beyond our highest estimation of what good is.

God is good to His own elect (Psalm 23:6). — “*The Lord is good!*” That is a sentence worthy of constant meditation. Eternity itself will not tell out the fullness of God’s goodness. And all His goodness is directed toward us at all times!

A STRONGHOLD

Secondly, Nahum says, “*The LORD is a stronghold in the day of trouble.*” — The only place of safety in this world is the place we find beneath the shadow of His wings (Proverbs 18:10). The Lord, who is good, is our stronghold, our place of refuge.

(Proverbs 18:10) “The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”

In the day of trouble, the Lord is our refuge (Hebrews 6:18; 4:16). We have our days of trouble as

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long as we live in this world, but notice how Nahum describes them.

- Everyday of trouble is “*The*” day of God’s appointment.
- Every day of trouble is temporary — only the “*day*” of trouble (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).
- Whatever the trouble may be, the Lord is our Stronghold in the midst of the “*trouble,*” every kind of trouble (Hebrews 4:16).

What is a stronghold? — A stronghold is a mighty fortress for the protection of citizens against the aggressions of enemies. It is...

- A place of safety.
- A place of peace.
- A place of residence.
- A place of provision.

KNOWETH

I like this last statement in verse 7 — “*The LORD knoweth them that trust in him.*” Do you trust in him? Do you trust His Son, His finished work, His

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abundant grace, His many promises, His providential rule, His unerring wisdom? Do you trust this great, mighty, good God? If you do, hear this and be of good comfort — *“The Lord knoweth them that trust in him.”* That word “knoweth” is pregnant with consolation. **It means...**

1. **The Lord has foreordained and predestinated them that trust in Him** (Romans 8:29).
2. **The Lord everlastingly loves them that trust in Him** (Jeremiah 31:3).
 - Without cause.
 - Without condition.
 - Without beginning.
 - Without change.
 - Without end.
3. **The Lord is intimately acquainted with them that trust in Him** (Matthew 10:30). **He knows...**
 - Who they are.
 - Where they are.
 - All they have done.
 - What they need.
 - All that He will do for them and with them!

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4. The Lord graciously approves of them that trust Him (Ephesians 1:6 — “Accepted”).
5. The Lord holds loving communion with them that trust in Him (John 15:15).
6. The Lord tenderly cares for them that trust in Him (Isaiah 43:1-5).
 - He is with you.
 - He will protect you.
 - He will provide for you.
 - He will help you.
 - He will keep you.

Tamar may disguise herself so that Judah does not know her. Isaac, through dimness of sight, may pass over Esau and bless Jacob. Joseph may forget, or be forgotten by, his brethren. Solomon may not be able to tell who the child belongs to. And Christ may come to His own and not be received. But “*the LORD knoweth them that trust in him.*”

- He knows Daniel in the lion’s den.
- He knows Job on the dunghill.
- He knows Peter in prison.
- He knows Lazarus at the rich man’s gate.

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- He knows Abel falling to the ground by his brother's wrath.
- He knows me.
- And He knows you (2 Timothy 2:19).

7. **And the Lord will publicly own them that trust Him** (Revelation 3:5).

(Revelation 3:5) “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

- He owns us now.
- He owns us before the throne (1 John 2:1-2).
- He will own us before all worlds in the last day.

(Ephesians 2:7) “That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

APPLICATION

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1. Let us ever trust the goodness of God, even when we cannot see His goodness.
2. Let us flee to and abide in our mighty Stronghold.
3. Let us ever trust our Savior's loving care.
4. If the Lord who is good knows me, I want nothing else to satisfy me.
 - He knows eternally.
 - He knows perfectly.
 - He knows universally.

(Psalms 107:8) “Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!”

(Psalms 107:15) “Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!”

(Psalms 107:21) “Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!”

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(Psalms 107:31) “Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!”

Listen to the tornado and take refuge in my Savior
(Isaiah 32:2).

(Isaiah 32:2) “And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Amen.